

Volume 06 Issue 2

JULY 03, 2006

The Navigator

Waukesha County Veterans' Services

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FEDERAL, STATE & LOCAL BENEFITS UPDATE

NEWS UPDATE FOR FEDERAL BENEFITS



Office of Privacy Protection— Safeguarding Information for Your Future

The following information was received from Governor Jim Doyle

On May 22, 2006, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that personal information of 26.5 million veterans was stolen after the home of a VA employee who took a laptop containing this information home was burglarized earlier this month. According to the VA, this data breach affects all veterans who were discharged after 1975, and possibly earlier if the veteran filed a claim. The information taken includes social security numbers and dates of birth.

This data breach exposes all veterans whose information was stolen to identity theft. While the VA states that it does not know of any instances in which the stolen information of veterans was used by identity thieves, veterans should take reasonable steps to make certain that they do not become ID theft victims. These steps include:

◆ Notify the credit reporting agencies

Call 1 of the 3 major credit reporting agencies immediately and ask them to place a fraud alert on your report with the notation that creditors should call you before opening any new accounts in your name. Notifying 1 of the reporting agencies will result in the other 2 being notified as well. When you call one of the reporting agencies listed on the bottom of page 8, you will be asked to provide certain information to identify yourself. Tell-a-Fraud alert will be placed on your report to help prevent identity thieves from getting credit or opening new bank accounts in your name. The alert will be active for 90 days.

If you call a credit reporting agency, follow up with a letter repeating what you said on the phone so that you have a record of your contact.

◆ Order a copy of your credit report

Federal law requires each of the major 3 credit reporting agencies to provide consumers with a FREE copy of their credit report each year. If you notice a credit card or bank account that you don't think you have, it might mean that an identity thief is at work. You can obtain your free credit report from Equifax, Experian and Trans Union by calling toll-free to 1-877-322-8228 or online at www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/index.jsp. By ordering one report from one of the reporting agencies every 4 months, you can get your free credit report 3 times per year.

◆ Contact your financial institution

Call your bank or credit union and tell them that your personal information has been compromised and that you are concerned about ID theft. Ask them to take measures to flag your accounts and to notify you of any activity that is unusual. Also ask what other measures they can take to assist you in protecting yourself. Again, if your initial contact is by phone, follow up with a letter repeating what you said on the phone so that you have a record of your contact.

◆ Check your bills and bank statements

If an identity thief strikes, you might first notice it on your bank or credit card statements. Even if you don't balance your checkbook or pay your credit card bill right away, look at the statement as soon as you get it to see if there are any unauthorized charges or withdrawals. If there are, report them right away. If your bill or statement doesn't come at the normal time, call and ask about it since late arrival could be another indication of identity theft.

◆ Contact the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs

If you have a question about what specific personal information of yours may have been com-

◆ **SEE BOTTOM OF PAGE 8**
for the names, address and phone numbers
of the 3 major credit reporting agencies.

(Continued on page 8 - Privacy Protection)

COMMENTARY CORNER By: John L. Margowski, Director

There certainly are a couple of topics of great concern for veterans in this issue. The first and most talked about topic is the Veterans Administration's (VA) loss of veterans, National Guard, Reserve and Active Duty personal data. I have tried to include enough information (it changes daily) to correct the loss of data and what you as a veteran should do to protect yourself.

At this point in time it does not appear that any veterans have suffered identity theft. You should take the precautionary steps contained in the articles to protect yourself and your identity. There are also articles appearing almost daily in the newspaper and on-line to keep you up to date and the progress of the ongoing investigation as well as the various steps being considered in Congress to put in place further protections in all federal agencies to try to prevent this from happening again.

The second most talked about topic is the mistakes made at some of the VA Medical Centers, with cleaning of test equipment used in

taking prostate biopsies. All veterans concerned have received a letter from the Medical Centers involved and they have been asked to come back for testing to ensure that they have not acquired any other medical problems resulting from the faulty cleaning of the testing equipment. So far all tested have come back negative for further medical complications.

If you are a veteran who is notified that you do have a medical condition resulting from this flawed testing, you should contact your County Veterans Service Officer to set up an appointment to discuss such options as secondary service connection or a tort claim.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be held in Milwaukee from June 19-23, 2007. They are in need of financial support and will also need many volunteers. Please help in any way that you can.

After the VFW State Convention this past week, I would again reiterate how much help they need. If you are a local post in the Milwaukee or surrounding counties please send a donation and also provide volunteers to help. This is a great community service opportunity for your post.

At the state level, there is an article on the Wisconsin Legislature's continued support and enhancement of Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs veterans programs. Wisconsin

continues to be a leader in programs available to veterans and their dependents and survivors. There are also a couple of excellent exhibits/programs being offered at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison this summer. All veterans should take their friends and family members to see this excellent museum as well as the informational programs they offer.

The "Moving Wall" will be in Madison from September 7—11, 2006. They need donations to help pay for the staging of the event and volunteers to help with the event.

This is an opportunity to shuttle veterans, survivors and loved ones to Madison to allow them an opportunity to visit the Wall. Many individuals will never get to Washington D.C. I know in Waukesha a couple of mothers whose sons died in Vietnam finally got closure by being able to come to the Traveling Wall and also to interact with other veterans and survivors of Vietnam veterans.

This year is an election year. You should be attending any campaign public events that you can and ask the candidates about their position on veterans programs and issues about which you have concerns. If you wait until after the elections, it's too late. And don't forget to vote!



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***"The Navigator" is published by:
The Waukesha County Veterans' Service Office.***

If you have any questions or comments about the contents of the newsletter, please contact Waukesha County Veterans' Service Office at 262-548-7732.

Veterans Administration and Health & Human Services to Target Diabetes, Obesity Among American Veterans

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov>

WASHINGTON (Feb. 27, 2006) - With obesity and deadly diabetes at significantly higher levels among America's veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have announced a coordinated campaign to educate veterans and their families about ways to combat these health issues.

"Inactive lifestyles and unhealthy eating habits can cause needless suffering for America's veterans," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "Obesity and diabetes are major threats to the health and lifestyles of our veterans, deserving a robust campaign to better educate them on healthy habits."

Veterans are more likely than the general population to have diabetes, one of the major complications associated with being overweight. According to the American Diabetes Association, 7 percent of the U.S. population has diabetes, and the rate increases with age. Among veterans receiving VA health care, who are on average older than the general population, the rate is 20 percent.

"Central to our goal of controlling the cost of health care is the promotion of wellness, fitness and the prevention of chronic disease. We are working to encourage Americans to adopt a healthy lifestyle and to take responsibility for making wise choices to improve their fitness and health," said HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt.

In a news conference here today, Secretary Nicholson, HHS Secretary Leavitt, Surgeon General Dr. Richard H. Carmona and VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin announced the start of a campaign called "HealthierUS Veterans" - a multi-pronged educational effort to spawn healthy eating and physical activity among veterans, their families and members of their communities.

VA medical centers will promote nutrition and exercise with local groups in 40 communities that receive grants from HHS in a program called "Steps to a Healthier US."

"Our service men and women are known for their extraordinarily high levels of fitness," said Perlin. "We want our veterans to be identified the same way."

Overweight patients receiving VA health care may participate in weight loss programs tailored to their needs. They may also receive pedometers, diet advisories and "prescriptions" suggesting how much to walk -- or, in the case of wheelchair users, how much to roll.

The two secretaries also plan to kick off regional educational campaigns this spring in four cities where VA and HHS Steps programs collaborate. Local celebrities and members of veterans service organizations will be invited to participate.

In May, the "HealthierUS Veterans" program will participate with the President's Council on Physical Fitness during the council's annual rally in Washington.



Issuance of New Purple Heart Stamp

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (May 26, 2006) - In continuing recognition of the sacrifices of combat-wounded veterans, the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, joined with top officials

from the U.S. Postal Service today to unveil a new Purple Heart stamp.

Nicholson, a West Point alumnus and retired colonel in the Army reserves, also presented the Purple Heart medal to two soldiers being treated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center for combat wounds.

"This stamp will be a daily reminder of the extraordinary valor of our service members," said Nicholson during remarks at a ceremony for the first day of issue for the stamp held at Arlington National Cemetery.

"It is fitting that we have every-day testimonials to the

wounds of war that, for some veterans, have occurred through their brave and selfless service to our grateful nation," Nicholson added.

Receiving the Purple Heart were Army Specialist Michael Hilliard and Army Specialist Ian Wagner.

The new 39-cent postal stamp has the image of the military's Purple Heart medal. Created by George Washington in 1782 for soldiers in the Continental Army, the Purple Heart now goes to military men and women wounded in combat. Next of kin of veterans who die in combat also receive the medal.

In 2003, the U.S. Postal Service first issued a 37-cent stamp with the medal's distinctive image - a profile of George Washington on a purple background within a heart-shaped medallion. The new stamp has the same image, although it comes in the new 39-cent value set for first-class postage.

VA Contacting Veterans Who Received Prostate-Biopsies

The following information was found on the internet "VVA Government Relations Department" govtrelations@vva.org

WASHINGTON – Some veterans who received prostate biopsies in medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 11 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico may have been treated with improperly disinfected instruments, VA officials announced today.

Although VA has not received any reports of patients being harmed, the Department is notifying all veterans who were treated by the equipment in question, called "a prostate biopsy transducer." VA is also offering follow-on testing to determine if these veterans were exposed to any other ailments.

"The safety of our patients is of paramount concern," said Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "VA's patient safety program detected this problem. Whenever there's a problem, we believe in notifying our patients and taking remedial steps immediately."

Although VA inspectors found that the equipment used for the prostate biopsies was being cleaned and disinfected after each procedure, some equipment was not being scrubbed by a brush after each use, resulting in the remote possibility of infection.

Improperly scrubbed equipment carries a small risk of exposing patients to Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and the Human

Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

VA is notifying patients who received prostate biopsies with the equipment in question at the following facilities:

- ◆ District of Columbia
- ◆ Iowa: Iowa City
- ◆ Maine: Togus
- ◆ Minnesota: Minneapolis
- ◆ Montana: Fort Harrison, Miles City
- ◆ Nevada: Las Vegas
- ◆ New York: Buffalo, Canandaigua
- ◆ Ohio: Cincinnati
- ◆ Oklahoma: Oklahoma City
- ◆ Oregon: Portland
- ◆ Puerto Rico: San Juan
- ◆ Tennessee: Memphis, Murfreesboro, Nashville
- ◆ Wisconsin: Milwaukee

Patients treated by the improperly scrubbed equipment will be notified and will be offered tests. The Department is working with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the manufacturer and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

VA Volunteers Mark 60th Anniversary Volunteers Donated 13 Million Hours Last Year.

The following information was found on the internet govtrelations@vva.org

WASHINGTON (May 15, 2006) - For as long as the United States has had veterans, the nation has also had men and women who volunteered to help in the care of the wounded, the sick and the injured.

But 60 years ago, a partnership was formalized when the Veterans Administration (VA) created an office to oversee the volunteers assisting at the agency's facilities. That office now has about 140,000 volunteers on its rolls, with 94,000 contributing more than 13 million hours last year. VA would have needed 6,200 employees to replace the time donated by the volunteers, at a cost of nearly \$228 million.

"Volunteers have always been at the heart of VA," said R. James Nicholson,

Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "They free our doctors, nurses and technicians for work that only a professional can do. They are visible proof, especially to our combat-wounded, that the nation deeply appreciates the many sacrifices of our veterans."

In April 1946, former General of the Army Omar Bradley, then head of the Veterans Administration, convened a meeting of veterans groups and welfare organizations to establish a national plan for volunteer assistance at VA facilities.

From that meeting grew the Voluntary Service Office that now works with more than 60 national groups to provide volunteers for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Our volunteers take your breath away with their spirit, selflessness and dedication," said Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "Our health care system is immeasurably better for their priceless contributions."

Volunteers assist hospital staff. They work in nursing homes, hospital wards, clinics, recreational activities, end-of-life care and many other programs. They also work in national cemeteries and benefits offices.



Architect Hired for Soldiers Home Chapel Restoration

Soldiers Home Foundation, Inc.—Press Release

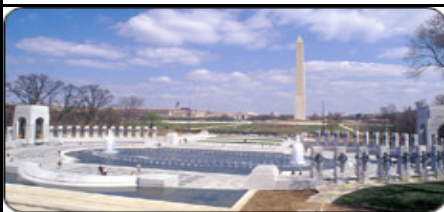
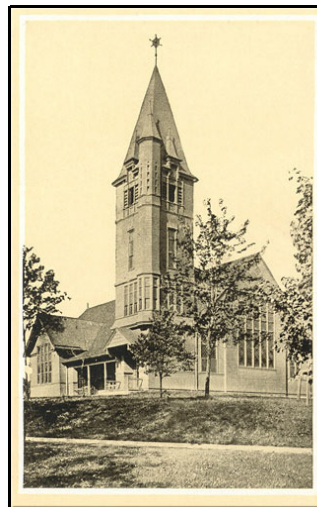
MILWAUKEE—The Soldiers Home Foundation, Inc., took the first official step in its plan to restore the 1889 Home Chapel on the grounds of the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee by hiring a well-known architectural firm specializing in historic structures that promises to "make the chapel smile."

The Foundation selected **The Kubala Washatko Architects, Inc., of Cedarburg, Wis.**, because of the firm's historic preservation experience, especially with National Register of Historic Places sites such as the Chapel, explains Kristin Gilpatrick, Soldiers Home Foundation president. "What is important, as we move forward on a plan for a building that is so culturally, spiritually, and historically significant, is Kubala Washatko's community approach to preservation efforts," she notes, "especially their work to solicit and incorporate the desires of project stakeholder groups—from veterans to VA chaplains and from preservationists to former parishioners—into a restoration plan that is most compatible with the Chapel's unique history, pristine architecture, and future use."

The Kubala Washatko Architects, Inc. (TKWA) is looking forward to guiding the preservation of the Home Chapel, adds Donna Weiss-Priebe, project manager. "This proposed work is much more than a project to TKWA; it is an extension of our commitment to historic preservation," Weiss-Priebe stresses. "We are excited for the opportunity to share with the Soldiers Home Foundation in the awesome responsibility of reawakening this nationally significant icon to America's veterans."

The Foundation and its newly-hired architectural firm are already gathering Chapel restoration desires. That effort will culminate Saturday, June 3, with special listening sessions during the Foundation-sponsored Reclaiming Our Heritage event, hosted in the National Soldiers Home Historic District by the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center. "We expect to have thousands touring the grounds, and the Chapel. Kubala Washatko and Foundation board members will be at the Chapel to gather memories and restoration opinions," Gilpatrick notes.

The Soldiers Home Foundation plans to complete Chapel restoration by 2008. The Foundation's plan is to reopen the Chapel for veteran use and funerals as well as VA and visiting chaplain use, historic displays, weddings and other ceremonies, and multi-denominational, patriotic, and educational community events. For details on the Soldiers Home Foundation and its Chapel project, visit www.soldiershome.org or call 414-389-4135.



The World War II Memorial honors the 16 million who served in the armed forces of the U.S., the more than 400,000 who died, and all who supported the war effort from home. Symbolic of the defining event of the 20th Century, the memorial is a monument to the spirit, sacrifice, and commitment of the American

World War II Memorial—Washington DC

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.opa.pressrel/>

people. The Second World War is the only 20th Century event commemorated on the National Mall's central axis.

Visiting the Memorial

The memorial opened to the public on April 29, 2004 and was dedicated one month later on May 29. It is located on 17th Street, between Constitution and Independence Avenues, and is flanked by the Washington Monument to the

east and the Lincoln Memorial to the west. The memorial is now operated by the National Park Service and is open to visitors 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For more information about visiting the memorial, accessibility, parking, directions, special events and other details, please visit the National Park Service Web site at www.nps.gov/nwwm or call the Park Service at (202) 619-7222.

Hiring Initiative Allows IED Survivors to Fight Back



WASHINGTON (Army News Service, April 10, 2006) – Servicemembers seriously injured by improvised explosive devices during duty in the global war on terror are getting a unique opportunity to use their experience to combat and prevent future IED attacks.

The Joint IED Defeat Organization has entered into full partnership with the Operation Warfighter (OWF) program at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in an initiative to target, recruit and hire servicemembers, including many who have suffered serious injuries from IED attacks.

OWF lets Soldiers continue service

Operation Warfighter is a nationwide program that places wounded servicemembers in positions within the federal government. Through this partnership, servicemembers can now continue their service to the nation working for the Joint IED Defeat Organization, and possibly transition into government service or civilian positions in the same organization once they leave active duty.

"This is an opportunity for these true heroes to get back into the fight," said Army Sgt. Maj. Clifford Lovejoy, who oversaw the recruitment and hiring of 22 soldiers. Five of them are currently on staff at the Joint IED Defeat Organization, which was created in October 2003 as an Army task force to serve as the single focal point for all Defense Department IED defeat activities.

Using a balance of intelligence, training and technology, the organization wages a coordinated campaign to defeat current and future IED threats endangering joint and coalition forces, officials said.

This organization will certainly benefit from the presence, experience and competencies of recuperating OWF personnel who have been injured as a result of an IED attack," said Army Brig. Gen. Dan Allyn, the JIEDDO's deputy director. "They have first-hand knowledge of the threat and the challenges being faced in the theater. Synergies will be gained by having them integrated into the staff here."

Initiative caters to special needs

The initiative also provides support services for servicemembers brought into the organization. JIEDDO supervisors oversee the transportation needs of each individual, arranging for parking and transit passes as appropriate. More importantly, the work week is modified for each member to accommodate rehabilitation needs at Walter Reed.

"Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, I leave at lunch and spend the rest of the day at Walter Reed for rehab," said Army National Guardsman Lt. Col. Dennis Walburn, who started at JIEDDO Feb. 14, and was the second OWF volunteer to arrive. "I am thankful for this opportunity, because I realize that there are guys out there who have it worse."

Walburn lost his left leg above the knee as a result of an IED blast in Mosul, Iraq, in May 2005. His treatment at Walter Reed moved into a less rigorous phase and he eagerly wanted to work in an area where he could continue to help the deployed troops. He then learned of the JIEDDO recruitment of IED survivors.

The JIEDDO recruiting effort at Walter Reed began Jan. 17. After open advertising of the opportunities, 65 personnel were interviewed. From that original pool, 22 were selected. Those on staff are assigned to various positions in the organization where they contribute to the effort to defeat the IED threat.

Walburn is assigned to the Strategic Communications Division, where he is assisting in congressional affairs, public affairs and industry outreach initiatives. Although all of the 22 original selectees are from the Army, Lovejoy said, the program will grow and eventually include servicemembers from other services who are injured due to IED attacks.

We are looking for the best, the brightest and the most capable to join the team," he said. "Getting all of the services involved allows us to merge this whole team into the best you can have to win the war on terror."

(Editor's note: Information from American Forces Press Service; based on a Joint IED Defeat Organization news release.)

America is #1

Thanks to Our Veterans



27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Milwaukee, WI

June 19-23, 2007 The following information was found <http://www.va.gov>

Presenters – The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are presented each year by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), with additional support from numerous corporate and community sponsors.

Hosts – The Milwaukee VA Medical Center and the Wisconsin Chapter of the PVA are hosting the 2007 National Veterans Wheelchair Games. The events take place in and around the Milwaukee area, June 19-23, 2007.

Welcome to Milwaukee – We are honored to support and welcome more than 500 veterans with disabilities from across the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain to our city, to compete in the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games – the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world!

Site Selection – Each year, VA and PVA jointly select the site for the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, based on availability of sports venues, accessibility of the city and local interest. At each host site, a local organizing committee works closely with national VA and PVA officials to ensure the success of the Games. As a premiere sports city, excellent accommodations and numerous areas of visitor interest, the athletes are looking forward to experiencing a week of Milwaukee's finest.

Coordinator – Brian Walker is the Local Coordinator for this event. He can be reached at (414) 389-4009, or by e-mail at brian.walker@va.gov.

Competition/Venues – Many of the 2007 events will be held at the Midwest Airlines Convention Center in downtown Milwaukee, as well as other local venues including Veterans Park, Grant Park, Whitnall Park, Schroeder YMCA, AMF Bowlero Bowling Center and the Milwaukee County Zoo. At the Games, veterans compete in:

Track (100-3000 meters), Field (discus, shot-put, javelin, club), Swimming, Basketball, Weightlifting, Softball, Air Guns, Quad Rugby, Bowling, 9-Ball, Table Tennis, Archery, Power Soccer, Wheelchair Slalom (obstacle course), Handcycling, Motorized Wheelchair Rally, Exhibition events.

Eligibility – The Games are a multi-event sports and rehabilitation program open to military service veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments.

Volunteers – To accommodate the needs of the athletes, more than 2,000 local volunteers are required to assist with all aspects of the Games, from helping with transportation, event set-up, water distribution, assistance with meals, and

numerous other activities that will help guarantee a successful event. If you are interested in volunteering please call Denise Jashinsky at (414) 384-2000, ext. 41803, or e-mail denise.jashinsky@va.gov.

Fundraising – To make this event happen, the local hosts are hoping to raise substantial monetary donations to offset the cost of the Games and to treat our nation's wheelchair athletes to a quality week in Milwaukee.

Benefits – to the mind: The purpose of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games is to provide veterans with physical disabilities an introductory experience to a variety of wheelchair sports, and expose them to the numerous organized wheelchair sports and recreation activities available nationwide. In doing so, the Games serve to encourage veterans to become aware of their abilities and potential while promoting a spirit of healthy activity and camaraderie.

Benefits – to the body: The National Veterans Wheelchair Games clearly demonstrate the therapeutic value of sports and competition. As presenters of the event, VA and PVA are committed to improving the quality of life for veterans with disabilities and fostering better health through sports competition. While past Games have produced a number of national and world-class champions, the event also provides opportunities for newly injured veterans to gain sports skills and be exposed to other wheelchair athletes.

Benefits – to the spirit: Since the annual Games began in 1981, thousands of disabled veterans have enjoyed the health benefits provided by sports participation, and have revitalized the spirit of competition within themselves.



Point of Contact:

Brian Walker, Local Coordinator
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Phone (414) 389-4009 Cell (414) 234-7354
E-mail: brian.walker@va.gov

For more information about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, visit the event web site at:

www.wheelchairgames.org.

Potential Questions Regarding the Stolen Data from the VA

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov>

Topic A – WHAT HAPPENED AND HOW DOES THIS AFFECT ME?

A1. What happened?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has recently learned that an employee, a data analyst, took home electronic data from VA that was stored in his home on a laptop computer and external hard drive. He was not authorized to take this data home. This behavior was in violation of VA policies.

The employee's home was burglarized and the computer equipment, along with various other items, was stolen. The electronic data stored on this computer included identifying information for millions of veterans. Authorities believe the computer equipment, rather than any data on it, was the target of the theft. It is possible the perpetrators remain unaware of the information that they possess or of how to make use of it. However, out of an abundance of caution, VA is taking all possible steps to protect and inform all veterans, servicemembers, and reservists potentially affected.

A1.a. What action has been taken against this employee or his supervisor?

The employee is cooperating fully with the investigation. The employee was initially placed on administrative leave, and VA is implementing procedures necessary to dismiss the employee. Also, the official responsible for the organization in which this employee served has resigned his position because of the events.

A2. What information was included?

The data lost is primarily limited to an individual's name, date of birth, and social security number. In some cases, spousal information may have been included. However, this information alone may be useful to identity thieves, and we recommend that all veterans, servicemembers, and reservists be extra vigilant in monitoring for signs of potential identity theft or misuse of this information. Importantly, the affected data did not include any of VA's electronic health records or any financial information.

A2.a. The letter from VA says that the information stolen included disability ratings. What information does that include?

The information stolen did not include medical information about any veteran, servicemember, or reservist, nor did it include any information from VA's electronic health records. For some veterans who have applied for VA disability compensation benefits and have been determined by VA to have a disability related to their military service, the data may have included the number of service-connected disabilities a veteran has and the veteran's overall disability percentage rating. No other information related to any veteran's disability rating was included.

A3. How do I know if information about me was stolen?

At this point, we do not have information available to confirm the specific individuals whose personal information may have been included in this data loss. VA just recently identified through a data match with the Department of Defense (DoD) that information on approximately 2.2 million servicemembers and reservists was also included on the lost data file. The investigation is ongoing.

Letters are being released to the affected individuals beginning on June 3. Because of the number of affected individuals, the letters will be released over a period of about two weeks. Those who have been affected should expect to receive a letter by June 15. This time-frame may vary by a few days based on postal service schedules for mail delivery.

A3a. Does this only affect veterans discharged after 1975?

This data loss potentially affects all veterans who have ever filed a claim for VA disability compensation, pension, or education benefits, or who have (or had) a VA insurance policy – no matter when the claim was filed or when they were discharged. These veterans would be included even if their claim was denied or they are not currently receiving benefits. VA automated its records systems about 1975 and began regular input of information received from the Department of Defense on all separating veter-

(Continued on page 9 - Stolen Data)

(Privacy Protection—Continued from page 1)

promised, contact the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs. The VA has teamed up the Federal Trade Commission and has a website www.firstgov.gov with information on this matter or you may call 1-800-333-4636. The call center will operate from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. (EDT), Monday—Saturday, as long as it is needed. Finding

out what information was on the disk(s) that was stolen will help you determine what steps you should take to protect yourself.

If you have difficulty in completing any of these steps or if you run into resistance from anyone, please contact the Wisconsin Office of Privacy Protection at 800-422-7128 or e-mail us at WisconsinPrivacy@datcp.state.wi.us. You can also visit our website for more information at privacy.wi.gov.

Equifax
PO Box 740250
Atlanta, GA 30374-0241
888-766-0008
TDD: 800-255-0056
www.equifax.com

Experian
PO Box 9532
Allen, TX 75013
888-397-3742
TDD: 888-397-3742
www.experian.com/fraud

TransUnion
PO Box 6790
Fullerton, CA 92834-6790
800-680-7289
TDD: 877-553-7803
www.transunion.com

(Stolen Data—Continued from page 8)

ans. When VA automated its records systems, VA also input data from all historical claimant records that had been manually maintained by the agency. We urge all veterans to be extra vigilant and monitor their financial accounts.

A3b. Were active-duty and National Guard/Reserve members included?

Working with the DoD, VA has determined that the data stolen on 26.5 million individuals included information on active-duty military personnel. Initially, it was thought that approximately 50,000 active duty, National Guard and Reserve personnel might have been involved.

However, as the two agencies compared electronic files, VA and DoD learned that personal information on as many as 1.1 million military members on active duty, 430,000 members of the National Guard, and 645,000 members of the Reserves may have been included in the data theft.

VA receives records for every new accession and military enlistee because active-duty personnel and National Guard and Reservists are eligible to receive certain VA benefits, such as GI Bill educational assistance and the home loan guaranty benefit.

A3c. We have heard that the stolen computer equipment contained records on 26.5 million veterans. Are the 2.2 million active-duty and guard/reserve members' records in addition to that number?

No, the active duty and guard/reserve individuals are part of the 26.5 million. Through continuing efforts to identify, to every extent possible, what information was included in the data on the stolen computer, VA has determined that active-duty and guard/reserve members were included.

A4. I have never applied for benefits from VA. Do I need to be concerned?

The electronic data on the stolen computer equipment includes information from many veterans, servicemembers, and reservists who have never filed for VA benefits or contacted VA. Since the 1970s, VA has received information from the Department of Defense on all who served. If you are a veteran or are currently serving on active duty or are in the Reserves or National Guard, you are encouraged to take steps to protect yourself against identity theft, whether or not you have ever applied for VA benefits. VA is taking steps to notify affected individuals by letter. These letters should be received by June 15, allowing a few additional days for delivery by the postal service.

A5. I am the spouse, widow, or child of a veteran. Was my information included?

It is unclear whether any spousal or dependents' information has been compromised. However, if this did occur, it appears it would be a very small number of people.

A6. Will I still get my monthly benefit payment?

Yes. There will be no impact on benefit payments.

Topic B – WHAT SHOULD I DO?

B1. What should I do to protect myself? Do I have to close my bank account or cancel my credit cards?

At this point there is no evidence that any missing data has been used illegally. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs is asking all veterans to be extra vigilant and to carefully monitor bank statements, credit card statements and any statements relating to recent financial transactions, and to immediately report any suspicious or unusual activity.

For tips on how to guard against misuse of personal information, visit the Federal Trade Commission website at <http://www.ftc.gov/>.

You do not have to close your bank account or cancel your credit cards. You should however take steps to protect yourself against identity theft.

One way to monitor your financial accounts is to review your credit report. By law you are entitled to one free credit report each year. Request a free credit report from one of the three major credit bureaus – Equifax, Experian, TransUnion – at www.AnnualCreditReport.com or by calling 1-877-322-8228.

B1a. What do you mean by suspicious activity?

Suspicious activities could include the following:

- ◆ Inquiries from companies you haven't contacted or done business with
- ◆ Purchases or charges on your accounts you didn't make
- ◆ New accounts you didn't open or changes to existing accounts you didn't make
- ◆ Bills that don't arrive as expected
- ◆ Unexpected credit cards or account statements
- ◆ Denials of credit for no apparent reason
- ◆ Calls or letters about purchases you didn't make

B2. What is identity theft?

Identity theft occurs when your personal information is stolen and used without your knowledge to commit fraud or other crimes.

B3. I haven't noticed any suspicious activity in my financial statements, but what can I do to protect myself and prevent being victimized by credit card fraud or identity theft?

The Department of Veterans Affairs strongly recommends that veterans closely monitor their financial statements and visit the Department of Veterans Affairs special website at www.firstgov.gov.

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(Stolen Data—Continued from page 9)

B4. Should I reach out to my financial institutions or will the Department of Veterans Affairs do this for me?

The Department of Veterans Affairs does not believe that it is necessary to contact financial institutions or cancel credit cards and bank accounts, unless you detect suspicious activity.

B5. What is the earliest date at which suspicious activity might have occurred due to this data breach?

The VA employee's home was burglarized and the computer equipment was stolen on May 3, 2006. If the data has been misused or otherwise used to commit fraud or identity theft crimes, it is likely that veterans may notice suspicious activity beginning in the month of May.

B6. What should I do if I detect a problem with any of my accounts?

The Federal Trade Commission recommends the following four steps if you detect suspicious activity:

Step 1 – Contact the fraud department of one of the three major credit bureaus:

Equifax: 1-800-525-6285; www.equifax.com;
P.O. Box 740241, Atlanta, GA 30374-0241

Experian: 1-888-EXPERIAN (397-3742); www.experian.com; P.O. Box 9532, Allen, Texas 75013

TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289; www.transunion.com;
Fraud Victim Assistance Division, P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92834-6790

Step 2 – Close any accounts that have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.

Step 3 – File a police report with your local police or the police in the community where the identity theft took place.

Step 4 – File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by using the FTC's Identity Theft Hotline:

By telephone 1-877-438-4338

Online at www.consumer.gov/idtheft

By mail at Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington DC 20580.

B7. Where can I get more information?

The Department of Veterans Affairs has set up a special website for veterans which features up-to-date news and information. Please visit www.firstgov.gov.

B8. What are my remedies if my identity is stolen and used illegally?

VA is working aggressively to determine what additional protections we may be able to provide to veterans as a result of this incident. We have not been advised of any special restitution that might be available for any losses related to this specific incident.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has produced a booklet to help you remedy the effects of an identity theft. It describes what steps to take, your legal rights, how to handle specific problems you may encounter on the way to clearing your name, and what to watch for in the future. The contents of the booklet, **Taking Charge: Fighting Back Against Identity Theft**, are available on-line at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/credit/idtheft.htm>.

B9. Can Social Security put a flag on my number?

No, unlike the credit bureaus, the Social Security Administration cannot put a flag or security alert of any type on your Social Security number.

To report that someone is using your Social Security number, file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by using the four steps outlined in the previous column:

- ♦ Internet— www.consumer.gov/idtheft
- ♦ Telephone— 1-877-IDTHEFT (1-877-438-4338)

B10. Can I get a new Social Security number?

The Social Security Administration will not issue you a new Social Security number as a precaution if you are concerned or think your number may have been stolen as part of the VA data theft. SSA assigns a new SSN in rare cases and only if the number holder provides evidence that the old number has been used with criminal or harmful intent and that the misuse has caused the number holder to be subjected to recent economic or personal hardship.

B11. The letter from VA warns individuals to guard against "phishing" efforts and telephone solicitations asking for personal information. What does this mean?

"Phishing" is a term that relates to unsolicited messages that individuals receive on their computers. "Phishers" send an email or pop-up message that claims to be from a business or organization that you may deal with — for example, an Internet service provider (ISP), bank, online payment service, or even a government agency. The message may ask you to "update," "validate," or "confirm" your account information. Some "phishing" emails threaten a dire consequence if you don't respond. The messages direct you to a website that looks just like a legitimate organization's site. But it isn't. It's a bogus site whose sole purpose is to trick you into divulging your personal information so the operators can steal your identity and run up bills or commit crimes in your name.

VA also warns individuals to beware of telephone solicitations by people who claim to be from VA or other trustworthy sources asking you to give personal information or to verify or correct personal information. VA, other government agencies, and legitimate organizations will not contact you to ask for or confirm your personal information. If you receive such communications, report them

(Continued on page 11 - Stolen Data)

(Stolen Data—Continued from page 10)

to VA though this toll free number, 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636).

B12. *If I need a police report to claim identity theft, where do I get that?*

Individuals who are victims of actual identity theft should not have a problem filing a local police report about the incident. The Federal Trade Commission advises consumers who are victims of identity theft to get a copy of the police report or at the very least, the number of the report. It can help you deal with creditors who need proof of the crime. If the police are reluctant to take your report, ask to file a "Miscellaneous Incidents" report, or try another jurisdiction, like your state police. You also can check with your state Attorney General's office to find out if state law requires the police to take reports for identity theft. Check the Blue Pages of your telephone directory for the phone number or check www.naag.org for a list of state Attorneys General.

Information about steps to take if you are a victim of identity theft is available online at www.consumer.gov or by calling the Federal Trade Commission at 1-877-IDTHEFT (1-877-438-4338).

B13. *What do I do if the local police won't take a report?*

In order to file a police report, you must show you have suffered an actual identity theft or harm due to fraudulent activity or misuse of account information.

If you have experienced identity theft or harm, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) suggests providing as much documentation as you can to prove your case, including debt collection reports, credit reports, or other evidence of fraudulent activity.

Information about steps to take if you are a victim of identity theft is available online at www.consumer.gov or by calling the Federal Trade Commission at 1-877-IDTHEFT (1-877-438-4338).

The FTC also suggests being persistent if local authorities tell you that they can't take a report. Stress the importance of a police report; many creditors require one to resolve your dispute.

The FTC advises that if you're told that identity theft is not a crime under your state law, ask to file a Miscellaneous Incident Report instead. If you can't get the local police to take a report, try your county police. If that doesn't work, try your state police. Some states require the police to take reports for identity theft. Check with the office of your State Attorney General www.naag.org to find out if your state has this law.

B14. *Can I get a copy of the police report about the stolen computer and veterans' data?*

We do not have access to any police reports or any other investigative reports filed as a result of this incident. The investigations by the police, VA's Inspector General, and

the FBI are still ongoing.

B15. *I heard about an Air Force website (<https://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/checker/>) where I can verify whether my information was stolen. Is it a legitimate site and why isn't there a link to it from the VA website?*

The website is maintained by the Air Force Personnel Center and is an official Air Force website. We do not have any specific knowledge of the source of their information.

Topic C – WHAT IS VA DOING ABOUT THE SITUATION?

C1. *What is VA doing about this?*

The Department of Veterans Affairs is working with the President's Identity Theft Task Force, the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to investigate this data breach and to develop safeguards against similar incidents. Task Force members have already taken actions to protect the affected veterans, including working with the credit bureaus to help ensure that veterans receive the free credit report they are entitled to under the law.

Appropriate law enforcement agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA OIG), have launched full-scale investigations into this matter.

C1a. *Is a reward being offered?*

On May 25, 2006, the VA's Office of Inspector General (VA OIG) and the FBI announced a \$50,000 reward through the Montgomery County Crime Solvers organization, for information that leads to the recovery of a laptop computer and external hard drive that contained personal information for millions of veterans.

Montgomery County Police are working with the FBI and the VA OIG in the investigation of this residential burglary that occurred on May 3, 2006, in the Aspen Hill community of Montgomery County, Maryland.

At this stage of the investigation there is no evidence that the suspect or suspects responsible for the theft had any knowledge of what information was stored on the hard drive. The primary objective of the investigation is the recovery of the laptop and external hard drive.

Anyone who can provide information that leads to the recovery of the laptop and external hard drive that contains the veterans' data should call Crime Solvers of Montgomery County at 1-866-411-TIPS (8477), or the FBI tip line at 800-225-5324. A cash reward of \$50,000 will be paid for information provided to either tip line that leads to the recovery of these items.

C2. *How is information about this incident being shared?*

(Continued on page 12 - Stolen Data)

(Stolen Data—Continued from page 11)

We are providing as much information as we have about the incident and alerting veterans of the situation. We are in the process of identifying who may have been affected so we can provide them more information, where possible.

Veterans can go to www.FirstGov.gov to get information on this matter.

VA has set up a manned call center that veterans may call to get information about this situation and learn more about consumer identity protections. Concerned veterans may call 1-800-FED INFO (333-4636). The call center will be open from 8 am (EDT) to 9 pm (EDT), Monday-Saturday as long as it is needed.

C3. When will more information be available?

Beginning June 3, 2006, letters are being sent to all affected veterans. If information about you was included in the data that was stolen, you will receive a letter. Additionally, if you have access to the Internet, information is being updated at www.FirstGov.gov. We will also continue to make public service announcement to publicize new information. We continue to urge veterans, servicemembers, and reservists to be vigilant in checking activities on their various accounts.

Topic D – WHAT ABOUT THE LETTER VA IS SENDING?

D1. To whom is VA sending letters?

VA is sending individual notification letters to veterans, servicemembers, and reservists whose personal information was included on the stolen computer equipment.

D2. When will the letter go out?

The letters will be released over a period of about two weeks, beginning on June 3, 2006.

D3. If I didn't get a letter, does that mean I wasn't affected?

If you did not get a letter, in all likelihood your identifying information was not part of the data that was on the stolen computer equipment.

D4. I have never contacted VA directly. How do you know my address?

VA does not have current addresses for all affected individuals. However, the Internal Revenue Service has agreed to forward all the letters to the affected veterans, servicemembers, and reservists. It is important to understand that the IRS has not disclosed your address or any other tax information to VA. VA identified the affected veterans to the IRS. The IRS is releasing the letters for VA.

D5. Can I give you my address to make sure you have it? (For call center agents)

We believe that virtually all affected veterans, servicemembers, and reservists will be contacted through the process we have established with IRS. We are therefore not taking addresses by phone. If you receive VA benefits or have a claim pending and would like to change your address with VA, please contact your local VA regional office by phone at 1-800-827-1000 or in writing.

D6. I'd like to see the letter even though I didn't get one. Can you send it to me?

VA sent the letter to potentially affected veterans, servicemembers, and reservists. A copy of the letter is available online at www.firstgov.gov.

D7. I got the mailing from VA. However, the envelope was empty (or the mailing was missing the Answers to Frequently Asked Question enclosure)(or the letter from the Secretary was missing). How can I get a replacement copy?

You can access a copy immediately on the Internet at www.firstgov.gov.

If you don't have access to the Internet, we will send you a replacement copy of the letter.

VA to Offer Free Credit Monitoring

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov>

WASHINGTON (June 21, 2006) - As part of the continuing efforts by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to protect and assist those potentially affected by the recent data theft that occurred at an employee's Maryland home, Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson today announced that VA will provide one year of free credit monitoring to people whose sensitive personal information may have been stolen in the incident.

"VA continues to take aggressive steps to protect and assist people who may be potentially affected by this data theft," said Nicholson. "VA has conducted extensive market research on available credit monitoring solutions, and has been working diligently to determine how VA can best serve those whose information was stolen.

"Free credit monitoring will help safeguard those who may be af-

ected, and will provide them with the peace of mind they deserve," he added.

The Secretary said VA has no reason to believe the perpetrators who committed this burglary were targeting the data, and Federal investigators believe that it is unlikely that identity theft has resulted from the data theft.

This week, VA will solicit bids from

(Continued on page 13 - Credit

VA Adds Maps to Online Gravesite Locator

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov>

WASHINGTON (June 20, 2006)- The grave locations of more than three million veterans and dependents buried in national cemeteries can be found more easily now because the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has added maps of burial sections online that can be printed from home computers and at national cemetery kiosks.

The latest improvement builds upon a service begun two years ago, in which a VA online feature permits family members to find the cemetery in which their loved one is buried.

"This new map feature makes it easier for families, friends and researchers to find the exact location of a veteran's grave in all national cemeteries and some state veterans cemeteries," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "It enhances VA's service at national cemeteries, already highly regarded, and our commitment to them as national shrines and historical treasures."

The gravesite locator <http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/> online since April 2004, helps veterans' families, former comrades-in-arms and others find the cemeteries where veterans are buried. With the new online feature, people enter a veteran's name to search, click on the "Buried At" (burial location) link and a map of the national cemetery is displayed, showing the section where the grave is located.

In a related development, VA recently added to its database the cemeteries in which 1.9 million veterans were buried with VA grave markers. These are mostly private cemeter-

ies. This addition brings the number of graves recorded in the locator to approximately five million. Those with maps are in VA national cemeteries and in state veterans cemeteries and Arlington National Cemetery if burials were since 1999.

Beyond the five million records now available, VA continues to add approximately 1,000 new records to the database each day. VA also plans to add to its online database the exact locations of veterans' gravesites in the remaining state veterans cemeteries.

In the midst of the largest cemetery expansion since the Civil War, VA operates 123 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than three million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict - from the Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terror - are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 16,000 acres of land.

Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses, and eligible dependent children may be buried in a national cemetery. Other burial benefits include a burial flag, Presidential Memorial Certificate, and a government headstone or marker - even if they are not buried in a national cemetery. Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov> or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1 800-827-1000.



(Credit—Continued from page 12)

qualified companies to provide a comprehensive credit monitoring solution. VA will ask these companies to provide expedited proposals and to be prepared to implement them rapidly once they are under contract.

After VA hires a credit monitoring company, the Department will send a detailed letter to people whose sensitive personal information may have been included in the stolen data. This letter will explain credit monitoring and how eligible people can enroll or "opt-in" for the services. The Department expects to have the services in place and the letters mailed by mid-August.

Secretary Nicholson also announced VA is soliciting bids to hire a company that provides data-breach analysis, which will look for possible misuse of the stolen VA data. The analysis would help

measure the risk of the data loss, identify suspicious misuse of identity information and expedite full assistance to affected people.

As part of VA's efforts to prevent such an incident from happening again, Secretary Nicholson previously announced a series of personnel changes in the Office of Policy and Planning, where the breach occurred; the hiring of former Maricopa County (Ariz.) prosecutor Richard Romley as a Special Advisor for Information Security; the expedited completion of Cyber Security Awareness Training and Privacy Awareness Training for all VA employees; that an inventory be taken of all positions requiring access to sensitive VA data by June 30, 2006, to ensure that only those employees who need such access to do their jobs have it; that every laptop in VA undergo a security review to en-

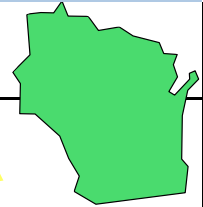
sure that all security and virus software is current, including the immediate removal of any unauthorized information or software; and that VA facilities across the country - every hospital, Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), regional office, national cemetery, field office and VA's Central Office - observe Security Awareness Week beginning June 26.

People who believe they may be affected by the data theft can go to www.firstgov.gov for more information. VA also continues to operate a call center that people can contact to get information about this incident and learn more about consumer-identity protections. That toll free number is 1-800-FED INFO (1-800-333-4636). The call center is operating from 8:00 am to 9:00 pm (EDT), Monday-Saturday as long as it is needed.

NEWS UPDATE FOR STATE BENEFITS

Vets Still Waiting for Chapter 1607...Apply Now

The following information was taken from the "Vets Grapevine"



Fifteen months after President Bush signed it into law, the federal VA began processing applications for "Chapter 1607," also known as the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP). Under this program, members of the National Guard and Reserves who were deployed for at least 90 consecutive days are entitled to an improved GI Bill that pays over \$400 per month instead of the \$297 they are currently receiving under Chapter 1606. Those who were on active duty for a year will receive over \$600 per month. Members eligible for "kickers" under 1606 will continue to receive them under 1607.

The law is retroactive to the time the veteran was on active duty after 9-11-01. Some veterans have been in school for years since coming off of their deployments. Even after deducting benefits they already received under chapter 1606, they will be entitled to thousands of dollars in back pay. The VA and the Department of Defense delayed the implementation of the program for 15 months and have not yet coordinated their computer systems for speedy processing. UW-Madison Veterans Coordinator Linda Struck stated that, "As far as I know, nobody has been paid yet." Much of the work is being done by

hand so it may be quite some time before eligible veterans receive their money.

There are more than 100 student veterans on the UW-Madison campus who are still waiting to receive this new benefit.

Here is what to do if you have been waiting for an unreasonable length of time for GI Bill money to start.

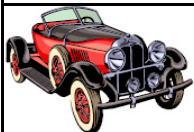
1. Wait some more. Even when the VA is "up to date" it takes at least a month to process GI Bill changes.
2. Check the WAVE web site (www.gibill.va.gov/wave/) to see if your claim was processed and/or you need to confirm your enrollment.
3. Call Linda Struck at UW Student Veterans Services to make sure you did everything correctly: 608-265-4138. Record the date she sent the paperwork to the VA.
4. If Linda can't help, call the VA at 1-888-GIBILL1. You are most likely to get through to a real person if you call early in the day. Do not let them convince you it's all your own fault.
5. Totally frustrated? As a last resort, do a congressional inquiry.

In Madison, your congressional offices are:

Sen. Russ Feingold 608-828-1200

Sen. Herb Kohl 608-264-5338

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin 608-258-2800



August 12-13, 2006 Iola Vintage Military & Gun Show

The following information is from Iola Vintage Military & Gun Show / Old Working Wheels

WHEN: August 12—13, 2006

WHERE: Iola Old Car Show Grounds
Iola WI

ADMISSION: Adults—\$5.00
Children 6 to 12—\$3.00
Children Under 6—FREE

PARKING—FREE

Enter the grounds through Gate #6,
located on Highway 161



Historical Vehicles & Memorabilia with Old Working Wheels.

ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Old Working Wheels
- ◆ Blood Drive on Friday
- ◆ Battle Reenactments
- ◆ Radio Control Model Aircraft
- ◆ Parade of Military Vehicles
- ◆ Genuine G.I. Breakfast of S.O.S.
- ◆ Speakers



FOOD SERVICE

11:00 A.M.—9:00 P.M. - (Friday)

7:00 A.M.—9:00 P.M. - (Saturday)

7:00 A.M.—5:00 P.M. - (Sunday)



Sponsored by: Iola American Legion, Iola-Scandinavia VFW, Waupaca VFW, Iola American Legion Auxiliary, Waupaca VFW Auxiliary

State Veterans Home Loan Legislation Passed by Congress

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.opa.pressrel/>

Legislation authored by Congressman Paul Ryan (R-WI) to preserve the state's veterans home loan program was included in a broader bill passed by Congress today.

"We are extremely pleased that Congressman Ryan has been successful in shepherding this measure through Congress," said Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary John A. Scocos. "It was desperately needed, and he came through for our veterans," said Scocos.

The state program, which relies on federally non-taxable bond proceeds to provide low-cost home loans to veterans, has been hampered by legal restrictions that have prevented issuing new bonds for new loans to veterans.

Federal law has allowed five states, including Alaska, California, Oregon, Texas, and Wisconsin to provide veterans home loans from the proceeds of issuing the tax-exempt Qualified Veteran Mortgage Bonds (QVMBs).

However, qualification restrictions, which required veterans' military service to have begun prior to 1977, prevented most home-buying veterans from being eligible for the program including those who served in Panama, the Gulf War, Somalia, the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

"We have been working on this issue with Congress, the other four affected states, and the veterans community for many years," said Scocos. "Today, that unified hard work has paid off," he said.

The new legislation expands the definition of eligibility to all qualifying veterans who are within 25 years of the date of their discharge from military service.

"Our newest returning veterans deserve the opportunity to buy their own home," said Scocos. "This will allow Wis-

consin to again offer affordable home loans to our newest returning veterans next year, or perhaps even as early as later this year," he said.

"As we welcome our newest veterans home, I believe that we should really welcome them home - to their own home," said Scocos.

Federal law has also prevented direct refinancing of state veterans home loans. As market interest rates tumbled in recent years, leading to a wave of refinancing with private lenders, the fund's balance fell sharply, threatening the future of the veterans loan program.

The veterans home loan program was kept afloat with the program's dwindling cash reserves, but in a "Stakeholders Conference" sponsored by the department last year, Scocos announced that without changes in the law, the veterans loan program would have to be shut down.

The state is advancing additional sources of financing for the state veterans home loan program.

Ryan's measure received strong bipartisan support, with cosponsors of the original bill including nearly every member of the Wisconsin Congressional delegation, including Representatives Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Mark Green (R-WI), Ron Kind (D-WI), Gwen Moore (D-WI), Tom Petri (R-WI), and F. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI). A Senate version of the legislation was authored by U.S. Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR), and cosponsored by Wisconsin's two U.S. Senators, Herb Kohl (D-WI) and Russ Feingold (D-WI).

After being signed into law by the President, the new program would be phased in over a five-year period, beginning in 2006 and sun setting in 2010.

Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs Elects New Officers

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.opa.pressrel/>

(MADISON) -- The Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs, governing body of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), elected new officers during its April 21 meeting in Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

Vietnam veteran Mack Hughes of Milwaukee was elected to serve a one-year term as Chair. Hughes succeeds Ken Wendt, a Korean War veteran, of Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

"As under the excellent leadership of Chairman Ken Wendt, I look forward to working with the Board under the leadership of newly-elected Chairman Mack Hughes," said John A. Scocos, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. "Chairman Hughes' knowledge and experience will greatly benefit the state's half-million veterans served by the agency the Board oversees," said Scocos.

Hughes has served on the Board since his appointment in October 2001. His nomination was confirmed by the state Senate in 2003.

Peter J. Moran, a Vietnam veteran of Superior, Wis., was elected Vice-Chair, succeeding Hughes.

Marvin J. Freedman, a Vietnam veteran of Middleton, Wis., was elected to serve as the Board's Secretary, succeeding Moran.

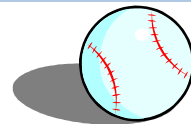
The Board's officers are elected to one-year terms by the members of the Board of Veterans Affairs. The Board's seven members are nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the state Senate, serving staggered, six-year terms.



Legion All-Star Game Set for Aug 20, 2006

The following information was taken from the Badger Legionnaire

Article by Bruce VandenPlas—American Legion All-Star Baseball Day Chairman



Legionnaires and their families are cordially invited to the 35th Annual American Legion All-Star Day at Miller Park on Sunday, August 20, 2006. Now is the time to begin your efforts to have your Post and friends represented at the All-Star Game.

All Posts are asked to support this event, and you can do that by purchasing tickets for the Milwaukee Brewers vs. Houston Astros game.

Tickets can be purchased through The American Legion State Headquarters. Let's rally together and show support for American Legion Baseball. Tickets for the game can serve a variety of purposes for your Post. Purchase for a group and organize a trip to Miller Park as a "thank-you" for dedicated members of your Post, or sponsor families whose loved ones have been activated for assignments overseas, so they can enjoy a fun day at the ballpark. Below is a game ticket order form.

Last year, over 1,900 tickets were used. Among those attending were Legionnaires showing their support for the Brewers and our All-Star players. This year, our goal is to surpass that by selling 2,000 tickets.

Over the past few years, we have had requests for better

seating arrangements. Previously, we purchased tickets in the Terrace Reserve section. Last year, meeting with Brewer management, we were able to develop a ticket plan for everyone's budget. Now, the Loge Outfield box and the Loge Bleachers are reserved for us during American Legion All-Star Day. The Loge Outfield box tickets are available for just \$20 and the Loge Bleacher tickets are just \$15.

When you purchase tickets to the Brewers/Astros game through State Headquarters, you will be supporting the American Legion Baseball program. A portion of the proceeds of each ticket sale through Headquarters is returned to us.

Remember, you need not be a Legionnaire to obtain tickets to the All-Star game. If you know of a friend or family member interested in attending, have them purchase their tickets through Headquarters and the American Legion Baseball program will get revenue from those tickets. All ticket sales for the All-Star game through State Headquarters help ensure American Legion Baseball will be strengthening young athletes for years to come.



American Legion Baseball Annual Baseball Day

Milwaukee Brewers vs. Houston Astros

Miller Park *** Sunday, August 20, 2006 *** All-Star Game Following the Brewers Game

GAME TICKET ORDER FORM

Post No. _____

RETURN TICKETS TO:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City & Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

LOGE OUTFIELD BOX _____ @ \$20 _____ \$ LOGE BLEACHERS _____ @ \$15 _____ \$

Additional Tickets _____ @ \$20 _____ \$ Additional Tickets _____ @ \$15 _____ \$

Total Ticket Order _____ \$ Total Ticket Order _____ \$

DEADLINE DATE FOR MAILING TICKETS: - AUGUST 14, 2006.

Make Checks Payable to: The Wisconsin American Legion Baseball Association

**MAIL
TO:**

**Wisconsin American Legion
Attn Carrie Thrasher
P.O. Box 388
Portage WI 53901-0388**

All Tickets will be mailed to you unless you give special instructions for pick-up at the State Headquarters.

Any Questions call Carrie at 608-745-1090 Ext 217

Baseball Season is Here and Stars & Stripes Sundays are Back!

The following information is from <http://dva.state.wi.us/events.asp>

As a way to pay tribute to the men and women serving in the United States Armed Forces and to continue participation in the Mission: Welcome Home program, the Milwaukee Brewers will continue "Stars and Stripes Sundays."

Each Sunday at Miller Park during the 2006 season, the Brewers are offering two FREE Terrace Level tickets to active, reserve, national guard and retired military personnel. The offer applies to all branches of the military service. Active and retired military personnel must present valid Armed Forces identification which entitles them to two FREE Terrace Level tickets redeemable at windows 7-12 at Miller Park on the day of the game only.

For current events pertaining to recently separated service members and Wisconsin veterans, visit the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs web site at: <http://www.dva.state.wi.us/events.asp>

2006 Stars and Stripes Sundays

Dates listed in **blue** are ALSO

"Welcome Home Days"

April 9 vs. Arizona

April 23 vs. Cincinnati

May 14 vs. New York Mets

May 21 vs. Minnesota

June 4 vs. Washington

June 11 vs. St. Louis

June 18 vs. Cleveland

July 9 vs. Chicago Cubs

July 30 vs. Cincinnati

Aug 20 vs. Houston

Sept 3 vs. Florida

Sept 10 vs. Houston

Sept 24 vs. San Francisco

Anheuser-Busch Corporate Supporter Extends Free Park Visits

The following information is from www.wisgov.state.wi.us

A national company's program that offers **free amusement park tickets** to the nation's troops and their families has become so popular it will be extended another year. Anheuser-Busch began the program, called **"Here's to the Heroes,"** in February 2005. The program is open to active duty service-members, active members of the Reserve or National Guard, and up to three direct dependents for one complimentary admission per year.

Participants can go online to fill out a form for free admission at <http://www.herosalute.org/>.

Rebecca Boehlke

Family Assistance Center Liaison

Southeastern Wisconsin

Department of Military Affairs

414-531-2093—Cell

414-961-8667—Office

rebecca.boehlke@wi.ngb.army.mil

WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

30 W. MIFFLIN ST
MADISON WI 53703
(Across from the Capitol)

SERVICES:

Gallery & Gift Shop Hours:

Monday—Saturday (year-round)
9 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Sunday (April—September)
Noon—4:00 p.m.

ADMISSION: Free for museum and programs unless otherwise specified.



GUIDED TOURS:

Available for groups of 10 or more.
(Advance reservations required)

Research Center

Tuesday & Thursday (Year-round)
9 a.m.—3:30 p.m.
or call for an appointment

FOR INFORMATION CALL:

608-267-1790—Museum
608-267-1799—Museum Store
WEB PAGE

<http://museum.dva.state.wi.us>

Legislature Passes Bill to Expand Veterans State Education Benefits Bill Would also Preserve IT Services, Fund Solvency

The following information is from www.wisgov.state.wi.us

(MADISON) - The Wisconsin State Legislature today passed 2005 Senate Bill 613, legislation that would expand the "Wisconsin G.I. Bill" program to provide full, free tuition at state schools for qualifying state veterans.

"For eligible Wisconsin veterans and their dependents, this expansion of veterans' educational benefits is perhaps the most dramatic since the creation of the original G.I. Bill during World War II," said Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary John A. Scocos.

Among the bill's other provisions is an expansion of eligibility for the Wisconsin G.I. Bill to include the dependents of veterans who die as the result of a service-connected illness or injury, and a simplification of the current program by removing a current requirement to demonstrate residency at the time the disability rating is awarded.

"Decades from now, we will look back on this as a watershed event, not only for Wisconsin veterans, but for the educational investment and economic development of our great state," said Scocos.

The bill also provides an exemption for the state Department of Veterans Affairs from a consolidation of information technology and staff. The state Department of Justice and the Office of the State Public Defender received similar exemptions under legislation enacted last year. The exemption would save the state's Veterans Trust Fund nearly \$300,000 per year, and would ensure the privacy of veterans military discharge, health, claims, and other records.

Additionally, the measure would ensure that County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) continue to receive needed state information technology support. In Wisconsin, state law requires each of the state's 72 counties to have a county veterans service officer, and directs small annual grants to the counties to offset some of the associated costs. CVSOs provide direct assistance to the state's approximately 464,000 veterans to ensure access to earned federal and state veterans benefits, programs, and services.

Currently, WDVA provides the counties with secure remote access to the state's veterans benefits information and application systems, including online access to specialized computer applications. Additionally, the department provides CVSOs and their staff with information technology training and dedicated, on-call technical support. Without the exemption, current assistance would be eliminated.

SB 613 provides additional measures intended to aid in ensuring the solvency of the state's Veterans Trust Fund, including allowing interfund transfers that would augment the Fund. Legislation enacted in 2005 implemented stabilizing measures that extended the solvency of the Veterans Trust

Fund over ten years, and included new revenue measures creating a tax form check-off and redirecting proceeds of state veterans' license plates to the Fund.

"Wisconsin's veterans will substantially benefit from this dramatic legislation, made possible by the unified efforts of the state legislature and its leadership in passing these remarkable measures," said Scocos.

The Wisconsin G.I. Bill program may be used at the state-supported University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Technical College System institutions. Under the bill, the expansion from the current 50% remission to a full 100% remission would become effective with the 2007 fall semester. The current, 50% remission for qualifying veterans, in place since the program was enacted in July 2005, would continue until the expansion becomes effective next year. To qualify for the program, a veteran must have been a Wisconsin resident at the time of entry onto active military duty, must be a Wisconsin resident for the purposes of receiving state veterans benefits at the time of applying for the tuition benefit, must have been discharged under honorable conditions, and must meet qualifying military service requirements.

Dependents of qualifying veterans who died in the line of duty, or who have been rendered significantly disabled by their military service are currently eligible for a full waiver of tuition and fees under the Wisconsin G.I. Bill. For eligibility under the disability provision, the veteran must have a current service-connected disability rating of at least 30%.

Support by the Legislature was near unanimous, with 89 original cosponsors that included Senators Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau), Ron Brown (R-Eau Claire), and Roger Breske (D-Eland), and Representatives John Gard (R-Peshtigo), Gabe Loeffelholz (R-Platteville), and Bob Turner (D-Racine).

The bill now awaits the Governor's action. To claim Wisconsin G.I. Bill benefits, eligibility must be established with the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), and the WDVA certification must be provided to the student's Wisconsin technical college or UW campus. To apply, applicants should use "Wisconsin Tuition Programs for Veterans and Dependents: Information, Forms, and Instructions," WDVA B0105.

The booklet and additional information is available on the Internet at www.dva.state.wi.us, by contacting the local county veterans service officer, or by calling WDVA toll-free at 1-800-WIS-VETS (1-800-947-8387). The booklet and forms would be updated when the increased remission level becomes effective in fall 2007.

“The Art of War” Explored at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum—Madison April 10, 2006 thru July 10, 2006

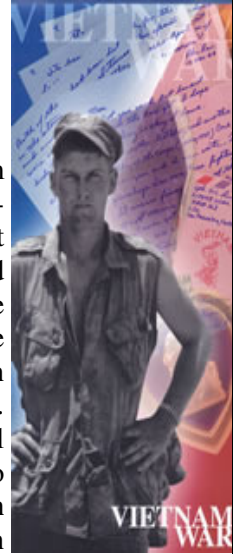
The following information is from www.wisgov.state.wi.us

(MADISON) — Following Vietnam, countless veterans looked to art to help them express their emotions, interpret their experiences and preserve or cope with their memories of service. A new exhibit at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum places some of this art on display. **“The Art of War: Trauma, Healing and the Vietnam Veteran,”** will be on exhibit from **April 10 to July 10, 2006, in the museum’s Changing Exhibits gallery.**

This limited engagement exhibit is loaned to WVM by the National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum of Chicago. It features nearly four dozen photographs, paintings, watercolors, etchings, sculptures, and mixed media pieces that highlight not only the Vietnam experience, but also how veterans have dealt with the trauma of war.

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum is a free public educational activity of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and is located at 30 W. Mifflin St., across the street from the State Capitol. The Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (year round) and Sundays (April through September) from noon to 4 p.m. The Museum’s Research Center is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

and by appointment. For more information **contact Jeff Kollath, at 608-264-6086, or go to <http://museum.dva.state.wi.us>.**



New Exhibit—Wisconsin Veterans Museum March 20, 2006 thru August 27, 2006 Wisconsin’s Involvement in Iraq

The following information is from <http://dva.state.wi.us>

(MADISON)— Wisconsin’s soldiers and airmen continue to play a large role in the war in Iraq. A new exhibit, titled: **“No Shakespeares: Wisconsin Marines in Iraq, 2004-2005,”** will open on March 20, 2006, in the Wisconsin Veterans Museum’s Changing Exhibits Gallery. Featuring the work of the Wisconsin’s Company G, 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines, 4th Marine Division, the exhibit shows both the human side to war and the intensity of the armed conflict.

Company G, 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines, 4th Marine Division, was in Iraq from September 2004 through March 2005. Called the “Mad Ghosts,” they played a key role in ensuring local elections, handling insurgent violence, and developing positive relationships

with Iraqi citizens. The exhibit includes photographs documenting not only their military work, but more human experiences, like cooking Thanksgiving dinner and celebrating a birthday.

A formal opening for the exhibit is scheduled for March 20, 2006, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. Refreshments and opening comments about the exhibit will be provided. The public is welcome to attend the opening. The exhibit will remain on display through August 27, 2006.

A series of four related programs are scheduled to coincide with the exhibit, and descriptions of each program follow this release.

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum

is a free public educational activity of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and is located at 30 W. Mifflin St.,

across the street from the State Capitol. The Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (year round) and Sundays (April through September) from noon to 4 p.m. The Museum’s Research Center is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and by appointment. For more information **contact Jeff Kollath, at 608-264-6086, or go to <http://museum.dva.state.wi.us.04>.**



Visit the Veteran’s Museum, 30 W. Mifflin St, Madison WI

NEWS UPDATE FOR THE LOCAL AREA



Exhibit—The Moving Wall “100 Hours of Honor”

In memory of the honorable service and ultimate sacrifice given by Kent W. Longmire. Welcome Home Comrade!

The following information was received from
Jeffrey C. Unger—State Benefits Advisor



When: Noon.—Thursday, Sept 7, 2006 —Opening Ceremonies
The Moving Wall will be open 24 Hours a Day until
Closing Ceremonies at 3:00 P.M. on Monday, Sept 11, 2006

Where: Veterans of Foreign Wars—Post 8483
5737 County Road CV
Madison WI 53704

Dedicated to the 2.7 million men and women who served in uniform in Vietnam.

Volunteers & Monetary Donations Needed.

The following information was received from :
Jeffrey C. Unger—State Benefits Advisor.



Veterans of Foreign Wars—Post 8483 is looking for volunteers to help organize the Exhibit “The Moving Wall—100 Hours of Honor”. If you can help, organizational meetings are held the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Post 8483, located at 5737 County Road CV, Madison WI 53704

Also, the Post is in need of monetary donations to help defray the costs of this GREAT event. There will be a “Proud Sponsor Board” at the site for all the people, organizations and/or companies to be recognized for their contributions.

No amount is too small or too great! Make checks payable to VFW Post 8483 and in the *memo write* “The Moving Wall”.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Jeff Unger at: 608-215-5667.

Wheelin’ Sportsmen NWTF Event

When: Sunday—August 13, 2006

Where: Lakeview Rod & Gun Club
Big Muskego Lake

Time: 11:00 A.M.—3:00 P.M.

The New Berlin Gobbler’ Longbeards and the Lakeview Rod & Gun Club are hosting a “*Wheelin’ Sportsmen Event*”.

This event for people with disabilities will offer Trap Shooting, Fishing, Boating, along with a picnic and music and games.

Wheelin’ Sportsmen NWTF is a national non-profit organization dedicated to providing opportunities for people with Disabilities to enjoy the great outdoors. Wheelin’ Sportsmen Events bring together the best of the outdoors—camaraderie, fun, fellowship—into an action packed adventure. The events pair disabled participants with non-disabled volunteers for a day of adventure and a lifetime of friendship.

The following information was received from Jim Lutzen

Shotguns and ammo will be provided for Trap Shooting if needed.

For More information and to register, Please contact:
Jim Lutzen at 262-786-4793
www.wheelinsportsmen.org

Directions: At New Berlin go south from I-43 on Moorland Road about 4 miles (Moorland Road becomes Durham Drive). Watch for “*Hunters Nest*” sign on the right. This is it!

This Event is sponsored by:
Sportsman’s Warehouse, New Berlin, WI.

